

Panel Shifts, Votes Closed Viet Hearing

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The Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday unexpectedly backed away from a confrontation with the Nixon administration on its Vietnam policy.

Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), committee chairman, announced that the Senate members, after a two-hour closed-door session, decided once again not to hold open hearings with administration witnesses at this time.

Instead, Fulbright said he would invite Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird to appear in closed-door session the week of Nov. 17.

After that, Fulbright explained, the committee would decide whether to release a sanitized public version of the secretaries' testimony, whether to go ahead with public Vietnam hearings, and whether to get around to hearings on senators' individual resolutions calling for a timetable on U.S. troop withdrawals.

"The committee didn't want to do anything that could be interpreted as being antagonistic or causing any undue inflammation of the public mind. These are very difficult times," Fulbright told reporters as he referred to the upcoming Nov. 13-15 protest movement.

Only the day before, after expressing his displeasure with the President's Monday night Vietnam speech, Fulbright had himself initiated the idea of going ahead with a public inquiry and "full review" into the administration's Vietnam policy.

"Americans will recognize the truth when they are exposed to it and that is the purpose of the hearing," Fulbright promised.

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Reporters were reminded that Rogers and Laird has assured the committee they would carry out the committee's original request to appear in public hearings—once the President's Monday night speech had been delivered.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), a senior committee member, also told reporters on Tuesday: "I hope the committee hearings can provide an educational forum in an endeavor to ally ourselves with the President to withdraw lock, stock and barrel."

But yesterday, Mansfield also changed his mind.

"What we are not going to do is put on a show. What we are going to do is be as constructive as we can, not for matters of publicity, but for matters of mutual interest. This can be very educational to us, as well as to the nation. I think it's laying a sound ground for a public hearing at the proper time," Mansfield said in an interview.

A poll of committee mem-

bers, Republican and Democratic, indicated that Fulbright and Mansfield indeed had backed away from their Tuesday impatience for an open inquiry. They reportedly joined ranks in deciding that the more "orderly" procedure would be to allow Rogers and Laird to confide as much as they could without the embarrassing glare of television and public listeners.

All involved denied that there had been any requests from the Administration trying to avoid a public confrontation.

"We wanted to avoid a tit-for-tat experience on troop withdrawals," one committee dove explained. Others recalled the bitter polarization over Vietnam the committee had experienced in becoming collectively the leading critic of the Johnson administration's policy.

Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.), another committee dove, explained that since President Nixon already had initiated a withdrawal policy the problem now was how to make it complete.

Fulbright suggested that the President "could only do so much in 30 minutes" and so it was necessary for his cabinet members to have a chance to "explain the rationale" of the speech to the committee members.

Fulbright was asked why the committee wasn't requesting an appearance from Henry A. Kissinger, the President's assistant for national security affairs. The senator explained that Kissinger had been asked to appear in the past but begged off because of his "confidential relationship with the President."

Also yesterday, 10 liberal Democratic Congressmen announced they would introduce a resolution to the House next Monday expressing the sense of the Congress that all U.S. forces should be withdrawn from Vietnam "on an orderly and fixed schedule."

Sponsoring the resolution were: Reps. Donald M. Fraser (Munn.), George Brown Jr. (Calif.), Philip Burton (Calif.), John Conyers (Mich.), Bob Eckhardt (Tex.), Don Edwards (Calif.), Robert W. Kasten-

meier (Wis.), Abner J. Mikva (Ill.), Benjamin S. Rosenthal (N.Y.) and William F. Ryan (N.Y.).

After the House concluded its business at 7 p.m. about a dozen Democratic war critics stayed on the floor to engage in a series of speeches expressing their disappointment at the President's Monday night speech. They placed in the Record a statement saying that "the President picked up a fallen standard and proclaimed Nixon's war ... the war he proposes to continue is disarmingly close to Johnson's war."

Also yesterday, Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) criticized the President's Vietnam speech by declaring: "The fact is that President Nixon has no policy for Asia, and no plan for ending the war. The fact is that the so-called 'Nixon Doctrine' is no different from the Dallas Doctrine or the Frank Doctrine, predicated upon the threat of nuclear retaliation, a readiness to police the world with nukes and arms either directly or subversively ..."